



March 11, 2013

Chairman David Howard
House Committee on Health Services
Room 451
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

VIA: PDF

RE: SB 230

Dear Chairman Howard and Members of the Committee:

We write to you today in support of Senate Bill 230, an act to revise laws governing the Board of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, sponsored by Senator David Wanzanried.

We are privileged to be a partner with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services' Montana Stroke Initiative, an example of a viable telemedicine solution that improves outcomes for patients who suffer a stroke and live in frontier, rural and urban areas of Montana. Early intervention and treatment like this, can dramatically minimize the potentially devastating effects of stroke and gives patients a better shot at lessening brain damage through specific treatment options.

Sen. Wanzanried's efforts to advance telemedicine in Montana supports and strengthens the innovative work we and our colleagues have engaged in to improve outcomes for stroke, by speeding delivery of care to patients, through telemedicine.

Even with excellent emergency medical services teams in place, the time to transport patients who may have suffered stroke, to a major hospital uses up precious minutes that are needed for quicker imaging, assessment and treatment decisions that may affect a patient for the rest of his or her life. Most rural areas across Montana, lack access to stroke neurologists who can provide advanced care in the first hours of a stroke. Telemedicine applications provide a vital benefit to these patients by linking them immediately with sub-specialty trained neurologists and shortening the time continuum from onset of symptoms to diagnosis and treatment.

This bill is so important to patients, particularly in rural settings. Not only can it generally expand speech therapy services via telehealth to our more rural friends and neighbors, but it also supports the important work of the Montana Stroke Initiative.

If we can be of additional assistance we hope you will not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you and thank you again for the work you are doing to support telemedicine practices across Montana to benefit our very rural, rural and urban patients. We strongly endorse these efforts to continue to broaden access to care for Montanans through telemedicine.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca M Manna".

Rebecca Manna
Chief Policy Advisor
Government Relations
Kalispell Regional Healthcare

Cc: Senator David E. Wanzonried
Sue O'Connell , LSD, Research Analyst, House Human Services Committee